

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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TAGS: PINT BF
SUBJ: ELECTION CAMPAIGN - GUARDIAN EDITORIAL ON ISSUES

FOLLOWING EDITORIAL FROM JULY 7 GUARDIAN REPEATED IN
ITS ENTIRETY FOR DEPARTMENT'S INFORMATION. IN OUR OPINION
IT CAPTURES THE TONE OF CAMPAIGN THUS FAR WHICH HAS
TOTALLY FAILED TO FOCUS ON ISSUES OR ELUCIDATE BAHAMIAN
ELECTORATE.

QUOTE: FACE THE ISSUES

IF WE ACCEPT THE PROPOSITION THAT GENERAL ELECTION
CAMPAIGNS USUALLY ARE CONDUCTED ON ISSUES FACING A
COUNTRY AT THE TIME OF AND PRECEDING THE GENERAL ELECTION,
IT SEEMS THAT THERE HAS BEEN A MARKED FAILURE ON ONE SIDE
TO DEAL WITH CURRENT ISSUES.

THE OPPOSITION ELEMENTS ARE HAMMERING AWAY AT WHAT
THEY PERCEIVE TO BE THE ISSUES ON WHICH THE
PRESENT GENERAL ELECTION OUGHT TO BE DECIDED. THE
OPPOSITION SPOKESMEN ALLEGE CORRUPTION IN GOVERNMENT. IT
IS PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE THAT THE PVC PIPE SCANDAL CAUSED THE
RESIGNATION OF THE THEN MINISTER OF WORKS AND UTILITIES WHO,
ASTONISHINGLY, WAS THEN APPOINTED A PARLIAMENTARY
SECRETARY MINISTRY OF FINANCE WHICH DEALT WITH
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PAYMENT FOR THE PIPES.

THE PRIME MINISTER STATED IN PARLIAMENT THAT THE MATTER
WAS UNDER INVESTIGATION BUT THE FINDINGS OF SUCH AN IN-
VESTIGATION, IF IT TOOK PLACE, WERE NEVER MADE PUBLIC; AND
AN IMPARTIAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY, SUCH AS WAS HELD INTO
ORGANIZED GAMBLING IN THE BAHAMAS IN 1967, WAS NEVER

APPOINTED ALTHOUGH CALLED FOR PUBLICLY. AS A RESULT, PUBLIC SUSPICIONS HAVE CONTINUED ABOUT POSSIBLE WRONG-DOING IN OFFICE.

THE LATEST ALLEGATION OF CORRUPTION CONCERNS A \$50,000 FEE WHICH IT WAS ALLEGED WAS PAID TO A MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT IN CONNECTION WITH THE SALE TO GOVERNMENT OF A HOTEL IN FREEPORT. PURPORTED PROOF OF THIS PAYMENT, IN THE FORM OF AN APPARENT RECEIPT SIGNED BY THE M.P. IN QUESTION, WAS PUBLISHED IN THE PRESS. THE PAYMENT OF THE FEE WAS ALLEGEDLY CONFIRMED BY THE PAYER, AND THE PURPORTED RECEIPT HAS NOT BEEN CONTESTED BY THE M.P. THE GOVERNMENT HAS REMAINED SILENT.

THERE ARE OTHER ALLEGATIONS OF CORRUPTION -- SOME OF WHICH, IN A WELL-RUN COUNTRY WITH A STRONG PUBLIC OPINION AND A HIGH STANDARD OF PUBLIC MORALITY, AUTOMATICALLY WOULD HAVE BEEN THE SUBJECT OF PUBLIC INQUIRY AND REPORT. IN THE CAMPAIGNING, SO FAR, THE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN MUTE ON THESE MATTERS OF ALLEGED CORRUPTION.

OTHER OBVIOUS ISSUES, WHICH WOULD BE SERIOUS ENOUGH AT ANY OTHER TIME BUT WHICH AT THIS TIME OF CAMPAIGNING SHOULD BE OF SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE, INCLUDE:-

THE QUESTION OF UNEMPLOYMENT -- WHICH IS AT AN UNPRECEDENTED LEVEL IN THE HISTORY OF THE BAHAMAS.

THE QUESTION OF INCOME TAX AND WHETHER OR NOT IT IS THE INTENTION OF THE GOVERNMENT TO INTRODUCE INCOME TAX TO THE BAHAMAS SHOULD THE PROGRESSIVE LIBERAL PARTY WIN THE GENERAL ELECTION.

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AS FAR AS WE ARE AWARE, THE P.L.P. HAS REMAINED SILENT ON THIS QUESTION DURING THE CURRENT CAMPAIGNING.

FOR THOSE OF THE PUBLIC WHO MAY NOT UNDERSTAND, INCOME TAX IS A FURTHER DEDUCTION WHICH WILL BE MADE FROM SALARIES AND WAGES. THIS WILL BE IN ADDITION TO THE DEDUCTION WHICH ALREADY IS BEING TAKEN OUT FOR NATIONAL INSURANCE. SO THAT WHERE AT PRESENT THERE IS ONE DEDUCTION FOR NATIONAL INSURANCE, IF INCOME TAX IS INTRODUCED, THERE WILL BE TWO DEDUCTIONS -- ONE FOR NATIONAL INSURANCE AND ONE FOR INCOME TAX.

THE OPPOSITION HAS A DUTY TO KEEP THE ISSUES BEFYRE THE PUBLIC. THE GOVERNMENT HAS THE RIGHT TO EXPLAIN OR REPLY TO THE QUESTIONS RAISED BY THESE ISSUES. OR THE GOVERNMENT MAY REMAIN SILENT -- AS IT HAS BEEN DOING. BUT IF THE GOVERNMENT AND THE P.L.P. CONTINUE TO REMAIN SILENT, THE VOTING PUBLIC ARE ENTITLED TO DRAW THE OBVIOUS INFERENCE FROM THAT SILENCE.

WHY IS THE PRIME MINISTER SO WILLING TO TALK ABOUT MATURITY AND STABILITY? THESE SUBJECTS ARE NOT ISSUES IN THE ELECTION DESPITE ALL MR. PINDLINGEFFORTS TO TRY AND MAKE THEM SO. LET'S DEAL WITH THE ISSUES. THE COUNTRY WISHES TO

HEAR FROM THE GOVERNMENT ABOUT THE ISSUES. AND, LET US
SAY, THOSE WHO IGNORE ISSUES -- WHICH TOUCH OR HAVE
TOUCHED THE MAJORITY OF THE ELECTORATE -- DO SO AT THEIR
POLITICAL PERIL AND MAY BE IN FOR A SURPRISE.
UNQUOTE
TAYLOR

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